þÿ S p e e c h T e x t V e n t r i l o q u i s m

Hoegaerts, Josephine

2021-04

þÿ H o e g a e r t s , J & W i k l u n d , M 2 0 2 1 , ' S p e e c h T e x t V e n t r i l o q u i s m ' , Interdisciplinary Voice Studies , vol. 6 , no. 1 , pp. 3-8 .

http://hdl.handle.net/10138/330495

publishedVersion

Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies
Volume 6 Number 1
 https://doi.org/10.1386/jivs_00033_2

EDITORIAL

JOSEPHINE HOEGAERTS
University of Helsinki

MARI WIKLUND
University of Helsinki

Speech–text–ventriloquism

WHERE DOES THE VOICE COME FROM?

Changing cultural and scientific discourses have displaced the voice more than once, severing its connection from the 'soul' and locating it in the lungs, the larynx or the brain. Dysfluent voices have flaunted old and new conventions, stuttering 'from the anus' (Martin 2016). Modern machinery seemingly conjures voices out of thin air … or out of levers, electric charges and wires instead of sinews and air. Meanwhile, as Steven Connor notes:

> The history of ventriloquism provides many examples of voices produced from surprising or illegitimate parts of the body. The ventriloquial voice speaks from the belly, from the sternum, from the armpit, from the genitals, from the nose, from a second throat, or alternative vocal apparatus hidden within or alongside the usual one.
>
> (Connor 2004: 300)

More importantly perhaps, the ventriloquial voice also travels in illegitimate ways. 'Thrown' to sound on someone else's behalf, it defies what we like to believe: that the intersubjective nature of the voice makes it move from the mouth of the speaker to the ear of the listener, that we can trace its wanderings back to an authentic, if not necessarily trustworthy, point of origin.

This issue takes the treacherous, trickster ventriloquial voice as a point of departure from which to delve into the realm of written text, and its potential for vocality. Including machines, transcription and other recording systems as ventriloquizing bodies, the contributors to this issue all offer analyses and critiques of the capacity of these technologies to 'throw' voices – sometimes across vast expanses of space and time. In doing so, they insist on the vocality of tangible and visual (but often mute) documents.

Research into the visual representation of sound has changed considerably over the last decade or so, in leaps and bounds. Studies of various tools with which to visualize sound waves, means of representing music and the aesthetic of sound exist alongside an increasingly sophisticated body of literature on the role of written alphabets and notational systems in representing speech and prosody (e.g. Brain 2015; Gitelman 1999). In the field of phonetics, advanced computer programs have been developed to analyse, measure and present graphically different features of speech (Boersma and Weenink 2020; Suni 2017). This interest in the relationship between the spoken and the written word is not new, of course: the temptation to imagine visual representations and written systems as a way of copying or even 'preserving' the spoken word is one that can be encountered in numerous historical texts as well as in more contemporary reflections of sound. Conversely, there are numerous critical approaches to this imagined mirroring between speech and text, and an insistence on the sensuous and culturally constructed body (e.g. Butler 2015; Bowles 2019; Rée 2000; Cook 2013; Jarman 2011; André 2018; Järviö 2015).

Both the steep rise in publications as well as the attendant methodological renewal in the field of sound studies with its innovative and alternative interpretations of several technologies of sound amplification, recording and reproduction play major roles in this re-imagination of links and tensions between voice and text (e.g. Sterne 2012; Morat 2017; Bijsterveld 2019). We nevertheless suggest in this issue that the human voice – a performative and embodied entity as well as a bodily technology (Martensen 2019: 15–16) – deserves its own chapter in the study of the representation of 'sound' on paper. Moreover, although musicologists, scholars of literature and rhetoricians have approached the question of the rendering of voice 'as' text or notation (e.g. Robson 2015; Bergeron 2010; Reid 2013), there is a lack of focus on the rendering of what is sonic and embodied (rather than aesthetic or discursive) about the voice.

It is argued in this issue that developing such a focus would require a dialogic and interdisciplinary approach. The sonic aspect of the voice occupies a space between language and music, between prosody and performance, between the speaker's mouth and the listener's ear. Investigation into the different ways in which such liminal spaces and practices have been rendered, both visually and textually, therefore requires expertise in different fields that do not always find themselves in conversation with each other. Building on conversations that occurred during an interdisciplinary conference held at the University of Helsinki in the summer of 2018, we aim in this Special Issue to foreground a dialogue between disciplines. The starting point was a remark made by one of the first speakers, Anne Wichmann, who talked about the changes wrought to the authorial 'voice' by the audiobook and its ventriloquist trappings. The theme subsequently recurred throughout the two days of discussion, informing participants' thinking and facilitating the exchange of ideas among various fields that otherwise employ very divergent vocabularies.

Despite their different paths towards the topic at hand, the authors contributing to this volume share a number of basic assumptions and premises on which they based their analyses. Most of these derive from the large body of existing research on practices of 'voicing' text in the fields of rhetoric, performance studies and linguistics. One of the shared premises is that the act of producing both the spoken and the written word is not only equally performative, but also equally embodied and culturally constructed. Disrupting the dichotomy between the oral and the scriptural is at the heart of all of the contributions. This takes somewhat different forms in the different disciplinary guises, ranging from practices of speech transcription aimed at absolute fidelity to the spoken 'original' among linguists and political stenographers, to artistic renditions of animal audition and Deaf vocality.

Moreover, all the contributions share a value-agnostic approach to vocal sounds – they are concerned with neither linguistic 'correctness' nor musical beauty, even if processes of normalization and the standardization of norms of 'good' speech and 'healthy' voices are at issue. Such approaches have become increasingly common in all the disciplines represented here, although interdisciplinary travel is not necessarily straightforward. The research reported in this volume is built on the long and illustrious tradition of relying on text to study, or even emulate, 'good' speech as well as on the school of critical thinking about historically contingent issues of style and delivery borrowed from recent insights in the field of rhetoric. It also represents a collective effort to be critical of assumptions about language, voice and sound that extend beyond the comfort zone of each author. As a result, the relationship between speech and text as addressed by the authors moves far beyond the usual contexts of the 'rhetorical'. It likewise reflects recent innovations in theatre and performance studies – although with explicit reference to spaces that are not overtly theatrical, political or public – and therefore goes beyond the 'stages' that tend to dominate discussions about vocal articulation, including in therapeutic, domestic and fictional settings.

As Nina Eidsheim recently pointed out (2019), 'voice study' is an intrinsically interdisciplinary field and therefore constantly and necessarily grapples with splits 'in ontology, epistemology, methods, and the very object "voice"'. Her primary focus is on the obvious split between the measurable and the symbolic voice (which translates roughly into cognitive/physiological approaches on the one hand and a more sociocultural, critical approach on the other). We could add that different epistemologies of the voice also coexist within the humanities, often without interacting in any explicit sense.

Our aim was therefore to bring together scholars with a sociocultural approach (including disciplines such as anthropology, history and literature studies), those who take a more computational approach to linguistics (such as in the study of prosody) and scholars who use their own voice and the voices of others as part of their methodology rather than as an object of study per se (i.e. oral history, sociology and social psychology). In line with this aim, we believe this collection provides novel approaches to a problem that is at the heart of voice studies: the relationship between vocalization and the existence of vocal utterances on the page (as different kinds of 'transcripts', similar to what Shane Butler and John Picker have identified as 'phonographic' practices).

In approaching this conundrum through the prism of the (metaphorically) ventriloquial voice, we hope we have brought new insights into the relationship between speech and text, and the role of the speaker within it. Text on the

page, such as the voice once emitted, leads a life of its own in the world, quite separate from any point of origin. It is like the rogue ventriloquist's dummy, a puppet without a master, left untethered and imbued with the power to speak the unspeakable – or to abdicate responsibility for what has been said (Kessler 2016). Insisting on the vocality of a text, even if ventriloquial, may therefore have value beyond satisfying an interest in the histories, anthropologies and psychologies of the voice itself. It also serves to reimagine the disciplinary conventions of fields that rely on these texts.

The various articles in this issue, although mutually connected, also push the boundaries of their own respective fields. Panayotis Panopoulos' engagement with the artistic exploration of voice in Deaf art, for example, unsettles the place of the 'sign' in anthropological research. Approaching the perambulations of sign language and Deaf voice from the perspective of ventriloquism and voice studies, he purports to 'not only unravel the phenomenology of a special kind of sensory experience, that is the deaf experience with sound and voice', but also to 'explore, widen, and even transgress common boundaries of sensory and aesthetic perception and experience in general'. This is the path that Shane Butler also takes in his article on 'Animal listening', in which he explores the sensory and auditory boundaries of human–animal representations in classic poetry. Taking an imaginary leap to non-human perception, Butler's analysis of the zoomorphic sheds light on human sounds and provincializes them in a multi-species context.

This focus on diverse vocalizations and auditions also extends to Laura Ekberg's article, which explores the concepts of 'voice' and 'ventriloquism' in translation, exemplified in Finnish translations of four anglophone Caribbean novels. With specific reference to the translation of proverbs and Caribbean oral traditions, Ekberg argues that the 'translator's own voice and the voices of other agents participating in the translation process become manifest both in the translation itself and in contextual materials related to the translation'. The process, in that sense, shares a number of characteristics with the processes of narration that are addressed in two other articles in the issue. Hanna Rautajoki and Matti Hyvärinen examine the rhetorical use of voices in conversational storytelling, focusing more precisely on the use of external voicing in narrative positioning. The authors differentiate between a 'material voice' and a 'metaphoric voice', analysing the differences and the relations between these two aspects of 'voice' in autobiographical interview data. They emphasize the importance of the 'multifold aspects of voice' in the conceptualization of 'ventriloquism'. Anne Wichmann similarly turns to this multiplicity in voicing in her study, but homes in on the prosodic aspects of reading aloud. More precisely, she focuses on the way in which different 'voices' project different speaking roles, and with them different conceptions of the 'self'. She goes on to identify four degrees of markedness: storytelling, news-reading, prayer and poetry reading, suggesting that speech styles could be characterized 'according to how much of the speaker's "self" is projected'. In conclusion, she points out that 'a speaker creates a "voice" for a purpose rather than for a physical setting'.

The last two articles in this volume take up this notion of a voice with a purpose beyond its physical setting, examining the ways in which voices travel specifically through modes of transcription. Ludovic Marionneau and Josephine Hoegaerts explore the extent to which material documentation can ventriloquize historical voices: delving into the rich transcripts of the French representative chambers of the long nineteenth century, they follow the

trajectories of political representatives' voices as they were projected in parliament, 'thrown' by stenographers, and re-imagined by newspaper-reading audiences. The materiality of the human voice weaves through these practices of voicing, notating and revoicing, taking different shapes through different media. This historical practice of transcription provides a counterpoint to contemporary modes of notetaking and transcription, such as those at issue in the article contributed by Mari Wiklund and Simo Määttä. Their analyses focus on the prosodic features of therapists' turns in conversation, as well as on the way in which they manage notetaking. Their study also illustrates the role of mediating voices in therapeutic practice, demonstrating how therapists orient a group of boys with autism spectrum disorder towards meaningful learning outcomes with regard to the topic of conversation ('taunting'). This allows them to assess the therapists' response strategies when they orient the group discussion and assess the speech produced by the children, either by validating it directly or partially, or by inviting them to provide new, more valid input.

Dancing on the edge between language, embodied practice and cultural convention, all the articles in this issue follow the voice on its peregrinations beyond its physical point of conception. In various ways they mobilize the methodological means of their own disciplines to undermine all-too-easy interpretations of text-copying; preservation; and the prescription of human, animal and fictional vocalization.

REFERENCES

André, Naomi (2018), *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement*, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Bergeron, Katherine (2010), *Voice Lessons: French Melodie in the Belle Epoque*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bijsterveld, Karin (2019), *Sonic Skills: Listening for Knowledge in Science, Medicine and Engineering (1920s-Present)*, London: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Boersma, Paul and Weenink, David (2020), 'Praat: Doing phonetics by computer', computer program, http://www.praat.org/. Accessed 3 March 2021.

Bowles, Hugo (2019), *Dickens and the Stenographic Mind*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butler, Shane (2015), *The Ancient Phonograph*, New York: Zone Books.

Brain, Robert (2015), *The Pulse of Modernism: Physiological Aesthetics in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Connor, Steven (2004), '"The strains of the voice" English version of an essay that first appeared in German, in a translation by Holger Wölfle', in B. Felderer (ed.), *Phonorama: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Stimme als Medium*, Berlin: Matthes and Seitz, pp. 158–72.

Cook, Nicolas (2013), *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eidsheim, Nina (2019), *The Race of Sound. Listening, Timbre and Vocality in African American Music*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Gitelman, Lisa (1999), *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Jarman, Freya (2011), *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities and the Musical Flaw*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Järviö, Päivi (2015), 'The singularity of experience in the voice studio: A dialogue with Michel Henry', in K. Thomaidis and B. Macpherson (eds), *Voice*

Studies: Critical Approaches to Process, Performance and Experience, New York: Routledge, pp. 25–37.
Kessler, Sarah (2016), 'On ventriloquism, dummies, and Trump's voice', Sounding Out!, 14 November, https://soundstudiesblog.com/2016/11/14/trumps-voice/. Accessed 3 March 2021.
Martensen, Karin (2019), *The Phonograph Is Not an Operahouse: Quellen und Analysen zu Ästhetik und Geschichte der frühen Tonaufnahme am Beispiel von Edison und Victor*, Munich: Allitera.
Martin, Daniel (2016), 'Stuttering from the anus', *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 5:3, pp. 114–34.
Morat, Daniel (2017), 'Parlementarische Sprechen und Politsches Hör-Wissen im deutschen Kaiserreich', in N. H. Wandel (ed.), *Wissensgeschichte des Hörens in der Moderne*, Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, pp. 305–28.
Rée, Jonathan (2000), *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses – A Philosophical History*, New York: Holt Paperbacks.
Reid, Christopher (2013), *Imprison'd Wranglers. The Rhetorical Culture of the House of Commons 1760-1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Robson, Katherine (2015), *Heart Beats: Everyday Life and the Memorized Poem*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Sterne, Jonathan (2012), *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*, Durham: Duke University Press.
Suni, Antti, Simko, Juraj, Aalto, Daniel and Vainio, Martti (2017), 'Hierarchical representation and estimation of prosody using continuous wavelet transform', *Computer Speech and Language*, 45, pp. 123–36, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.csl.2016.11.001. Accessed 9 March 2021.

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Josephine Hoegaerts

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3458-5444

Mari Wiklund

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1257-5341